

Deuteronomy 31:1-8 - Thursday, January 5th, 2012

(1) Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. (2) And he said to them: "I *am* one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.'

- As we begin this chapter, it's important to understand what Moses is not saying here, namely, that at 120 years of age, he's too old to move.
- Rather, what he is saying is that the time has come, at 120 years of age, for them to cross over the Jordan into the Promised-Land without him.
- The reason for this is because the Lord told him that he would not enter in because of what happened back when they were at Meribah.

- We have the account of this in Numbers chapter twenty when the Israelites are complaining and murmuring about not having any water to drink.
- The Lord tells Moses to take the rod, and gather the congregation, and "speak" to the rock so it will bring forth water for the Israelites to drink.
- So, Moses takes the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him, however, He does not do what God told him, and gets angry instead.

Numbers 20:10-11 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

- It's for this reason that Moses, the meekest man who ever walked on the face of the earth, won't be able to walk into the Promised-Land.

"Certainly Moses erred in smiting the rock, for he was bidden to speak to it. The best of men are men at best."

Charles Spurgeon

- Moses is downright angry at the Israelites and is even calling them names. Then, he starts taking his anger out on the rock by striking it.
- By the way, the Greek word for "rebels" is "moros," which is where we get our English word "moron." Moses is calling them "morons!"
- There's even a reference to this disastrous sin on the part of Moses that's recorded in the book of Psalms, chapter 106:32-33.

Psalms 106:32-33 32 By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them; 33 for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips. NIV

Numbers 20:12-13 12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." 13 This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.

- Ouch! I can't even begin to imagine how Moses felt when he heard the Lord say this to him. Oh how his heart must have just sunk!
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment, because I think that it is incumbent upon me to take a closer look at what's going on here.
- Here's why; Moses has been faithful in serving the Lord and leading the Israelites, and just because he loses his temper he's done?

- At first glance, this disqualification of Moses - may be seemingly disproportionate to the sin of anger that was committed by Moses.
- However, upon a closer examination, one finds just cause in what the Lord has meted out, in keeping Moses out of the Promised Land.
- First, Moses misrepresented God's nature, then he deliberately disobeyed God's command, and he exalted himself to God's power.

- His misrepresenting came when he became angry with the children of Israel implying that if Moses is mad then God must also be mad.
- His disobeying came when he struck the rock twice instead of speaking to it once implying that the "Rock" had to continually be smitten.
- His exalting himself came when he says; "Must 'we' bring water for you out of this rock" implying that he and Aaron are at par with God.

- It's as if God is saying; "Moses you deliberately disobeyed me, you blatantly misrepresented me, and you made yourself equal to me.
- This brings us back to our question which begs an answer; "Why would God disqualify Moses after walking so faithfully for 80 years?
- I believe the reason is chiefly because Moses ruined the typology as it relates to Jesus Christ Who was the Rock that was smitten once.

1 Corinthians 10:1-5 1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. NIV

- The thought here is that Jesus, as the Rock, was smitten only once when He was crucified on the cross for the sins of all mankind.

Hebrews 10:10-12 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. NIV

- Now, we can talk to Him and ask for the Holy Spirit from Him, to fill us to overflowing so our lives become torrents of living water.

Luke 11:9-13 9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" NIV

John 4:10 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." NIV

John 7:37-39 37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." NIV

- I suppose one take away from this is that the sin of misrepresenting God as being angry has to be taken with the utmost seriousness.
- Also, obedience to God, especially for those in positions of leadership, is an absolute must especially when we don't understand why.
- Another lesson that can be learned from this is that those in positions of leadership will be held to a much higher account before God.

James 3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. NIV

- Be that as it may, at least for me anyway, one of the most powerful lessons is how we are all prone to fail in areas of greatest strength.
- For Moses to do this, at this time and in this way, sobers me in that his meekness and his patience were his greatest areas of strength.

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! NIV

Unguarded strength is double weakness because that is where the "retired sphere of the leasts" saps. The Bible characters fell on their strong points, never on their weak ones. "Kept by the power of God" - that is the only safety.

Oswald Chambers, "My Utmost for His Highest" (April 19th)

- Moses is not alone in this; actually he's in very good company, because the scriptures are replete with the failures of great men of God.
- King David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, a man after God's own heart, falls with lust in his heart for Bathsheba, then, murders Uriah.
- The Apostle Peter, courageous enough to walk on water then take on the Roman army, denies Jesus as a coward before a servant girl.

- We know that failure won't have the final word in Peter's life, nor Moses' life because God is both merciful and gracious to restore them.
- It's interesting to note how God was still faithful to allow Moses to see the Promised Land, and at the transfiguration enter it with Jesus.
- Also, it's important to know that God, in his mercy, was still faithful to provide the water from the rock in spite of what Moses had done.

- One final thought; Moses remains faithful even after the unspeakable disappointment of not being allowed to enter the Promised-Land.
- This is so remarkable because it's so rare. It really rare to find one with a mature strength of character to remain faithful when told no.
- In my years as a pastor on the mainland, I had watched so many people leave a church because they couldn't do what they wanted.

(3) The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said. (4) And the LORD will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. (5) The LORD will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you.

- I love passages like this one here because they speak to the faithfulness of God yet future, based on the faithfulness of God in the past.
- In other words, Moses is reminding the Israelites of what God had already done prior, so as to build their confidence in Him for what's coming.
- This is why we see what we see next in verse six. God wants the Israelites to be both strong and courageous, knowing that they will fear.

(6) Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." (7) Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.

(8) And the LORD, He *is* the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

- When we get into the book of Joshua, especially the first chapter, we will hear this over and over again as the Israelites enter into the battle.
- There's something here that I would like to point out as it relates to fear, and why it is that it has no place in the life of the believer.
- I never imagine God telling us to not be afraid without also telling us why it is that we don't ever have to be afraid. Consider Hebrews 13:5b-6.

Hebrews 13:5b-6 NIV ...God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (6) So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"